

VZCZCXRO0698
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHGO #1701/01 3201123
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 161123Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5426
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0026
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3618
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7124
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0725
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2937
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0600
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001701

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: GAMBARI'S MEETINGS IN BURMA - UNCENSORED

REF: A. RANGOON 1678

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1609

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: UN U/SYG Gambari delivered a strong message to Burma's senior generals that the regime must choose between taking concrete steps toward democracy or face further action in the UNSC, according to UN Resrep Charles Petrie. General Than Shwe angrily denied that there was a humanitarian crisis in Burma or that the regime held any political prisoners. The regime manipulated Gambari's schedule from beginning to end, staging his visit to the National Convention for maximum propaganda value. Gambari delivered an offer from Than Shwe to ASSK, offering to release her from house arrest if she would agree to endorse the National Convention and to "abide by the laws of the country." ASSK rejected the offer, but said she is willing to enter a dialogue with the regime. According to the UN, ASSK was happy to see Gambari and welcomed his future visits.
End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Charge met with UN Resident Coordinator Charles Petrie on November 15 for a private, frank readout of U/SYG Gambari's meetings during his November 9-12 visit to Burma. Petrie told the Charge that Gambari was dismayed that the regime refused him access to a broader range of humanitarian and civil society groups. Petrie said he advised Gambari to postpone his visit as the regime had not agreed to the UN's three key conditions: allowing Gambari to stay at a hotel rather than the government guest house; granting broader access to members of political and civil society organizations; and permission to hold his meetings on UN premises. Despite Petrie's recommendation, Gambari pushed forward with the visit, hoping that some UN requests would be granted after he arrived. Unfortunately, none were.

"WE WERE USED"

[1](#)3. (C) Petrie told us that from the very beginning of the visit, it was clear the agenda was under control of the "hardliners." One of Gambari's first meetings, with the Minister of Planning, featured such a delusional presentation

of Burma's humanitarian situation by the Minister that the meeting lacked any subsequent credibility. Gambari's visit to the National Convention (NC) was stage-managed in such a way that Petrie admitted the regime "manipulated the UN from beginning to end." Instead of arriving at the convention after the daily session had concluded, as had been agreed, Gambari arrived to face a full-court media press, including TV cameras. The authorities seated the UN entourage in the center of the floor and filmed them while all of the NC delegates marched past them. Additionally, while Gambari waited to see Gen. Thein Sein, Secretary-I and Chairman of the Convention, the regime had various members of the convention say "good-bye" to Gambari with long speeches.

¶4. (C) Petrie noted that Gambari's meeting with the ethnic cease-fire groups during the NC visit was closely monitored. Even so, Petrie added, ethnic representatives told Gambari that their people needed more access to humanitarian assistance and expressed dismay that the NC was not addressing some of the most important issues between the regime and the cease-fire groups. Gambari mentioned the first but not the later during his briefing to the diplomatic community (ref A).

THAN SHWE LOSES IT

¶5. (C) Petrie said that Gambari met alone with Burma's top two Generals, Than Shwe and Maung Aye. Gambari brought a frank message to the regime, according to Petrie: Burma is at a crossroads; it has a clear choice of engaging with the international community and taking concrete steps toward democracy or facing action in the UN Security Council. Gambari told Than Shwe that in order to avoid UNSC action,

RANGOON 00001701 002 OF 003

Burma's leadership must take confidence-building actions quickly in the following areas: 1) offering greater access for INGOs implementing humanitarian assistance; 2) identifying a high-level GOB liaison to facilitate dialogue on humanitarian issues; 3) releasing political prisoners such as Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and the 88 Generation Student (88GS) leaders; 4) concluding an agreement with the ILO on a mechanism to address forced labor complaints; and 5) agreeing to an independent mission to Kayin (Karen) State to assess humanitarian needs.

¶6. (C) According to Petrie, when Gambari reached his point on humanitarian assistance, Than Shwe "lost it" and began to dress down Gambari in English. He denied that there was any humanitarian crisis in Burma, citing bogus GOB statistics to prove his point, and accused Petrie of being biased and under the influence of Burmese exile groups in Bangkok. Than Shwe allowed Gambari to continue, but lost his temper again when the U/SYG urged the regime to release political prisoners. Than Shwe switched to English again and denied Burma had any political prisoners. Gambari pushed hard on the ILO issue, urging the regime to agree on a mechanism to address forced labor claims before the ILO Governing Board meeting on November 15. Than Shwe brushed aside Gambari's concern and said that his Labor Minister assured him that Burma was close to an agreement with the ILO. Petrie said Gambari observed that during his interactions with the Than Shwe and Maung Aye, there appeared to be no space between them as is often reported in local rumor and the exile press. In addition, Maung Aye took a much more active part in the talks than last May.

¶7. (C) While Than Shwe rejected Gambari's appeal for a high-level GOB liaison to work with the UN on humanitarian assistance, Gambari did reach agreement during his meeting with Secretary-I Gen. Thein Sein that an inter-ministerial meeting with the UN Country Team would be convened to review the humanitarian situation in Burma. Petrie will push to convene the committee by the end of November. Petrie told us that he felt the UN has now reached a moment of confrontation

with the regime over humanitarian assistance. They plan to use the opportunity to confront the regime with a true picture of Burma's humanitarian problems and see whether the government is willing to work with the UN to address them. Petrie will prepare a three-to-four page brief, outlining the inaccuracy of the government's figures, to try to introduce reality into their fantasies. The brief will state frankly the UN's position on the humanitarian situation in Burma and will be used by the UN as an update of their strategic framework. Petrie also plans to present the paper to General Thura Shwe Mann, the Chief of the General Staff (number 3 in the hierarchy), with whom he indicated the Europeans plan to engage as a "track two" approach to get through to senior levels of regime.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI SUPPORTS DIALOGUE

18. (C) Petrie told us that during Gambari's meeting with Than Shwe, Gambari suggested to Than Shwe that he resume a dialogue with ASSK, based on the 2004 letter she wrote to Than Shwe (ref B). According to Petrie, Than Shwe showed no interest in this idea but instead authorized Gambari to deliver a different offer. Than Shwe's proposal included an offer to free ASSK if she agreed to endorse the National Convention and to "abide by the laws of the country." Petrie told us that, although ASSK refused Than Shwe's offer, she told Gambari she was not opposed to entering into a dialogue with the regime. However, she would not agree to leave the NLD now as she had offered to do in her 2004 letter. The Charge noted that ASSK needed to be free to speak and consult with her political party if there was going to be any useful dialogue. She should not be limited to visits only with her doctor. Such a move would signal the regime's true interest in moving forward with a dialogue.

19. (C) According to Petrie, ASSK was pleased to see Gambari and encouraged him to visit Burma more often. ASSK said she

RANGOON 00001701 003 OF 003

needed to see her doctor more regularly and pointed out that she had seen even less of her doctor than usual since Gambari's last visit. Gambari replied that he had also noticed the lessening access, but that he felt he must continue to push the regime on this issue.

110. (C) Petrie and other UN officials told us that Gambari considered the whole visit a "total disaster" until his meeting with ASSK. After this meeting, Petrie said, the "whole mission turned around." The UN was especially pleased that the photographs they took of ASSK with Gambari were circulated widely. Petrie reiterated that Gambari was especially disappointed with the way the regime manipulated his visit to the National Convention and expressed relief that pictures of Gambari with ASSK were circulating, rather than pictures of him at the NC. During a meeting with the Minister of Labor on the last day of his visit, Gambari emphasized that that NC process was incomplete and asked how the regime planned to fix it. The Labor Minister, reportedly close to Than Shwe and increasingly influential in formulating foreign policy, had no answer to Gambari's question.

111. (C) Comment: Rangoon's diQatic and UN community view Gambari's visit as a failure. Expecting more this time, they see Gambari as going away with Qss than he got during his May visit. So Petrie may be trying to put out a positive spin. To judge whether it is more than spin, let's see if Gambari begins criticizing the regime's recalcitrance rather than dismissing the NLD as irrelevant. Clearly Than Shwe feels he is negotiating from a position of strength and has adopted a much harder line towards the UN. Some see this as a Machiavellian ploy by number two Maung Aye to cause UN action that can be used to justify Than Shwe's removal. However, we doubt that he would be any more amenable to democratic openness and respect for human rights. End

Comment.
VILLAROSA